

December, 1972

Number Sixty-three

**This is a  
CALL TO PRAYER  
for  
THE LORD'S WORK  
in COLOMBIA**

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LIBRARY  
**COLOMBIAN  
NEWS**

Colombia, South America



**INFORMATION SERVICE OF THE MENNONITE MISSION IN COLOMBIA**

**NEW CHURCH BEGINS IN GIRARDOT**

During the September meetings of the Mesa Directiva (field council), plans were approved to begin working in Girardot, a tourist center about fifty miles southwest of Bogota. An evangelism committee composed of Armando Hernandez, Antonio Arevalo, Jaime Caro, Luis Lugo, and George Ediger began making plans for a visitation campaign. Since that time there have been special meetings the last weekend of each month along with film showings and home visitation. Every Sunday and Friday one of the pastors goes there to conduct services. These efforts have been facilitated by the interest of a family who opened their home to the church. At present there are about thirty children and eight adults who attend services regularly. We look forward to increased interest and participation as the Vidal Jimenez family moves there. Vidal has just completed two years at the Seminario Biblico Unido (United Bible Seminary) of Medellin. He anticipates spending two years in Girardot as practical experience before resuming his studies. The following is a brief letter to the readers of the "Colombian News" from Vidal.

Recent statistics indicate that there is a thirst for the Word of God in Latin America. The people of Colombia have demonstrated this in that they are ready to listen and accept the Good News of His power. They are a people who have opened their hearts and are ready to accept this life transformation. Being aware of the need to tell the Good News to others, the Mennonite churches have begun to take the message to other areas. Among these is the city of Girardot. We give thanks to God for this place He has prepared for us to begin a new work. We trust that the Holy Spirit will fill us with His Holy Power so that the seed planted there will not be platted in vain.



Vidal, Patricia, and Julia Jimenez

We are aware that there can be no progress without the Lord's direction. Therefore, we ask for your prayers so that it will be God who leads us on, and thus, many can come to know our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, personally. "But you are going to receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you must be witnesses for me in Jerusalem and all over Judea and Samaria, and to the very ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8 Williams)

### STUDENT GRATEFUL FOR SEMINARY EXTENSION

Samuel Cortes Jimenez is one of the promising youth currently studying in our seminary extension in La Mesa. The twenty-two-year-old graduated from our La Mesa primary school in 1964. Although an excellent student, he was forced at that time to leave his studies in order to help on the home farm, an hour-and-a-half walk from La Mesa. This year, however, he was asked to take care of an older brother's farm only a half-hour's walk from the center. Thus, he was finally able to take advantage of the seminary extension courses offered at the La Mesa church each Monday night. For his alert mind and consecrated spirit, the extension courses have provided an open door to a future with promise and purpose. Both in attendance and in his application to his studies at home, Samuel is currently one of the most faithful students at the seminary. Despite his disadvantage in basic education, he has successfully kept up in his studies to compete on a level with fellow high school students. This year he has completed with high marks an inductive study on the book of Acts and a two-semester course on doctrines of the Bible.

Samuel traces his spiritual pilgrimage back to his elementary school graduation. At that time the director of the school challenged him personally to serve his family, his church, and his country. These words were engraved indelibly in his memory. They spelled for him a duty he had to fulfill. However, three years ago Samuel says he found himself drifting in spiritual indifference, following in the footsteps of his older brothers. Realizing what was happening, one day alone at home he made the decision to follow Christ rather than his brothers. At that point was born in him an intense desire to study in the extension seminary at La Mesa. This year his dream became a reality.

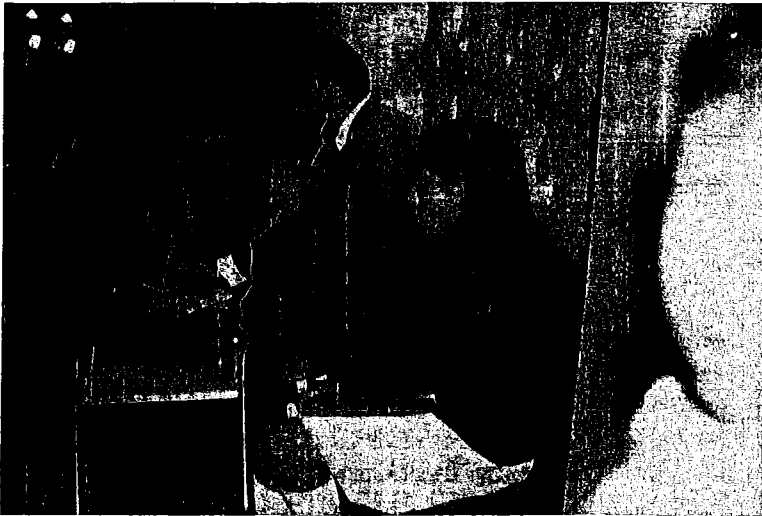
Samuel asserts that already his studies have brought him spiritual benefits, increasing his desire to serve the Lord actively in the church. This July he joined the church in baptism. His first sermon was preached in the church in November.

We are thankful to God for the privilege and challenge of serving youth such as Samuel Cortes through our seminary extension program. They provide a key to the future growth of the Colombian Mennonite church. We covet your prayers for them.

### SOIL FERTILITY RESEARCH PROJECT UNDER WAY



While collecting information on tropical crops, studying, and visiting church members on their farms, Mark Claassen has initiated projects to determine corn response to levels of fertilizer. Here Mark discusses with workers on a local farm near Cachipay the significant difference between the fertilized and unfertilized crop. Mark hopes that simple experiments of this type will build interest among the local farmers in improved practices with other crops as well.



Technician at Controls during Service

It is always exciting and challenging to be first to venture into something new and unknown even when it is known that the results may be a failure. Faith provoked the Bogota Mennonite Church in August to start a live radio broadcast of the Sunday morning service. According to the pastor who works two nights a week at the radio station, this is the first in all of Colombia.

As a result, church attendance has greatly increased both morning and evening. Many indicate that they listened in the morning and, consequently, have come to church in the evening. Practically every Sunday decisions are made for Christ. In spite of the recent purchase of

sixty new chairs, many people must stand during the morning service.

#### NEW LIBRARY IN CACHIPAY CHURCH

Reading good literature is not only a means of education and mental stimulation, but it can also be an instrument for spiritual growth. Many Christians who know how to read are hindered by a lack of funds to buy books. To help remedy this situation, the Cachipay Mennonite Church has started a lending library. Many families cooperated by buying one book to donate to the church library. At present the library contains over thirty books and the majority of them have already been checked out by church members.

#### GUESTS

At the end of August we were happy for the opportunity to entertain the Bruno Epp family for several days. They were en route to Elkhart, Indiana where they are presently studying at the seminary. The Epps have spent a good number of years serving under the COM in Paraguay and Brazil.

The arrival of Sara Claassen and Milka Rindzinsky in November was a welcome surprise. Sara, a sister of Mark Claassen, has been teaching in the Mennonite seminary in Montevideo, Uruguay. Her visit was short due to the fact that her classes had already begun in Germany where she plans to study music and sing. Milka is the librarian at the seminary in Montevideo and was able to visit Colombia en route to the meetings of JELAM in Costa Rica.

We doubt that Milka will ever be able to forget her visit. While sightseeing in Bogota with Vernelle, someone snatched her purse which contained all her important papers, plane tickets, and money. Milka ran chasing the man while Vernelle stood where she was praying. Soon a police car appeared and Vernelle explained the situation. They picked up Milka and drove around looking for the robber. The situation appeared hopeless so they returned to the police station where to their surprise they found a policeman holding the suspect. This policeman had stepped out of his home just as someone ran by clutching a purse. Recognizing that it was probably a thief, the policeman caught him. At the station, Vernelle and Milka officially identified him as the one who had robbed them. After everything was returned, Vernelle was able to share with the policemen that this was an answer to her prayers. There is no other explanation than that God performed another miracle and we are all grateful.

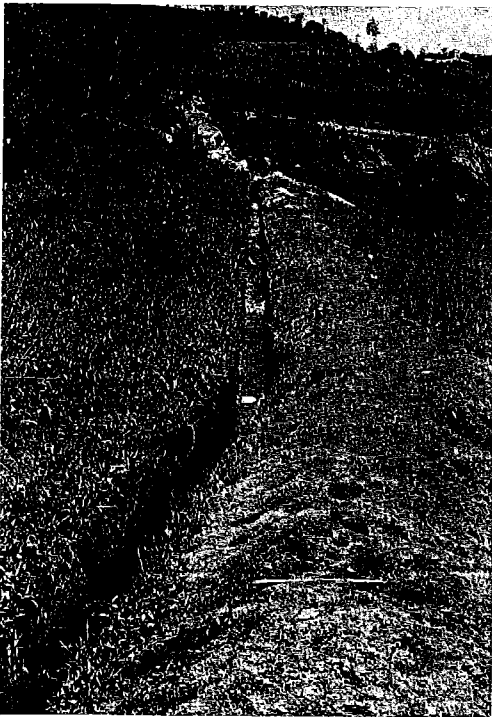


Vernelle in Anolaima

Satisfaction increases as we see more Colombians taking key positions in the work. Since each school has a Colombian directress, Vernelle has time to pursue other activities and interests which have been her concerns during many years of teaching and school supervision.

During the last few months since moving to Bogota, she has had gratifying experiences providing courses for Sunday school teachers and giving spiritual emphasis week classes in primary schools as well as teaching Christian education in the Extension Seminary of Bogota.

Vernelle's new role in Bogota is still evolving, but one thing is certain: it is not limited to working with Christian education alone. She also serves as the hostess for our guests as well as treasurer for the mission here.



#### PURE WATER FOR A CACHIPAY FARMING COMMUNITY

The Colegio Americano at Cachipay and its neighbors are actively involved in constructing a water system which will soon supply pure water to about thirty-two homes. A government agency is lending its engineering skill and supplying the materials which will be paid back gradually by the farmers during the next twenty years. The monthly payments will be minimal, definitely within the reach of these farmers. George Ediger has spent quite a bit of time on this project, much of which involved the paper work necessary to make the project a reality. Most of the work is volunteered by local farmers. This involves digging more than 10,000 feet of trench eighteen inches deep - all by hand! Much work remains to be done on three large supply tanks located close to the river from which the water will be taken. People in this area have been receiving water in open ditches, so the addition of the filter system in these tanks will be a welcome feature from the standpoint of community health care.



Graduating Class in Cachipay School



Cachipay Teachers

#### SCHOOLS .... WHAT LIES AHEAD?

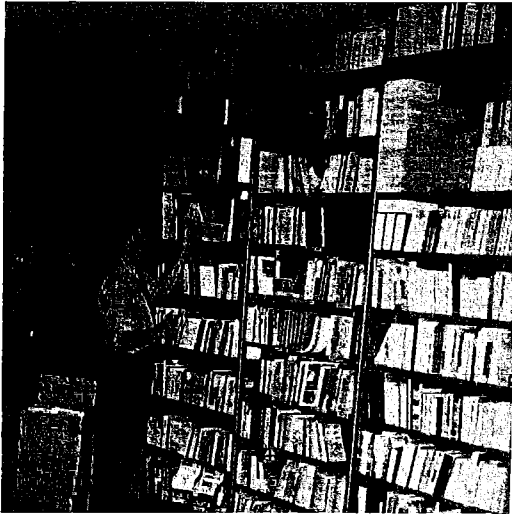
School doors closed for this year on November 25 in the three elementary schools currently operating in Anolaimi, Cachipay and La Mesa. This year in the three schools approximately 220 children were given a higher quality education than they would have received in the majority of the neighboring schools. The teachers, all of them national Christians, have tried not only to give the students the best possible secular education that they can, but also to have a spiritual and moral influence on their lives.

Two changes, however, are affecting the future of these schools, and are raising the possibility of their closure unless they become self-supporting. The first change is the order of priorities accepted unanimously at Chicago last June by those involved in Mennonite missions throughout the world. As evangelism and preparation of church leaders are given top priority, secular education, which until now has received emphasis in Colombia, must necessarily fall back in importance. Along with this new strategy which was also agreed to unanimously by Colombian church leaders, we have experienced a new climate more favorable to evangelicals and the education of their children in public schools in Colombia. More and more evangelical parents are placing their children in government schools which provide free public education. Some of the evangelical teachers currently on our staff are seriously considering teaching in a public school in the Cachipay neighborhood, which will certainly give them a widened ministry in the community.

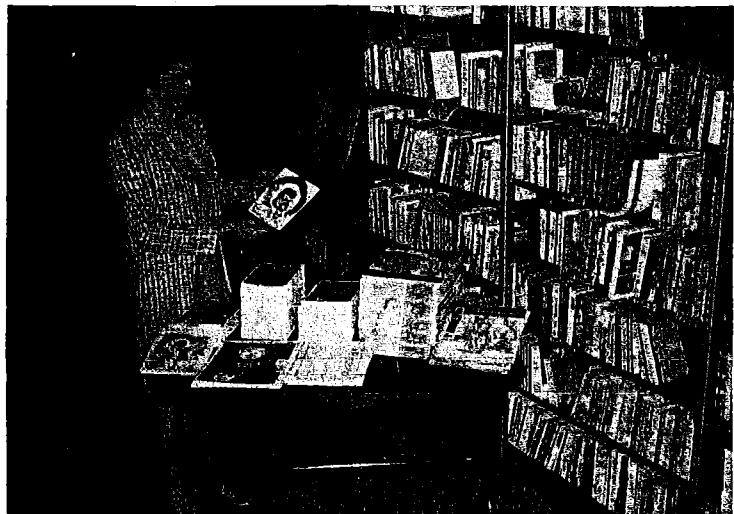
Many questions remain unanswered. The future picture is yet hazy. We do not know at this time in which direction our Colombian Mennonite schools will move, but changes and adjustments are being demanded of them, and will surely come about in the next few years.

#### GARAGE TURNS INTO BOOK SUPPLY ROOM

"Why don't you keep a supply of books from the La Mesa bookstore right here in your garage?" asked a friend one day. At the moment the Wiebes thought it would be very inconvenient to have some books in Bogota and others in La Mesa, but after thinking about it they realized that it would have many advantages. John bought one bookstand and filled it. Then the second. Now the third bookcase can't hold everything they would like to have on hand. The advantages to this are several. Now a lot of work can be done right here, with Elma helping, instead of John doing it by himself in La Mesa.



Garage Bookstore



Sunday School Materials

When John is going to take a book display to some church, they have the books right here to pack into boxes. After the trip Elma can again help unpack. When a new shipment of books arrives, the prices can be marked and the books put on the shelves. In this way John doesn't need to spend as much time away at La Mesa. Besides this, it is also very convenient to have books and records on hand for people who want to buy them. We cannot help but feel that God has lead in this and that it will be a blessing in many ways.

Other news regarding the bookstore is that we have been given the distributorship for a Sunday school publisher, "Ediciones Las Americas," which handles Sunday school materials as well as some other books. Although this does add to the work load we also feel that it is a challenging task to promote the use of good Sunday school materials as well as encourage the churches to have Christian education workshops provided by the publishers for interested churches.

#### NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF JELAM



In January we will be saying, "Hasta Luego" to the Hernandez family, whose name has become familiar to many of you. Armando and Eunice will be leaving Colombia for their new work with JELAM in Puerto Rico. JELAM, which stands for Junta Ejecutiva Latinoamericana para Audiciones Menonitas, is a relatively new organization made up of representatives of the Latin American Mennonite churches for the purpose of preparing and disseminating Christian radio programs in Spanish-speaking countries.

Armando will be leaving his position as president of the Mennonite churches in Colombia to assume a new role as executive director of JELAM beginning February 1, 1973. He was named to this position at recent meetings of the organization in San Jose, Costa Rica, attended by representatives from Argentina, Colombia, Uruguay, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Mexico, and the United States. His responsibilities will include supervision of the production of various radio programs, promotion of programs for use by radio stations in Latin America, search for talented Christians who can participate in production of the programs, and possibly the development of a cassette ministry.

We shall miss Armando's help here in Colombia, but are happy for this new opportunity he has been given to use his gifts in administration. We pray God's richest blessing on their family as they move and become involved in their new work.



Christmas Shopping, Anyone?



How about Some Barbecued Beef?

The Coming Child  
Welcome! all Wonders in one sight!  
Eternity shut in a span.  
Summer in winter, day in night,  
Heaven in earth, and God in man.  
Great little one! whose all-embracing birth  
Lifts earth to heaven, stoops heav'n to earth!

Richard Crashaw



He has come-

REJOICE

and open your heart to His love.

From left to right:

Vernelle Yoder

Mark and Lillian Claassen

Larry and Edith Tschetter

John and Elma Wiebe

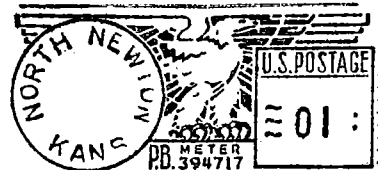
Lewis and Judy Sprunger

George and Margaret Ediger

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#### PRAISE AND PRAYER

PRAISE GOD for the interest encountered by those involved in the new work in Girardot.

PRAISE GOD for the positive response to the live radio broadcast from the Bogota Mennonite Church.

PRAISE GOD for the new areas of service open to us through Vernelle Yoder's ministry in Christian education.

PRAISE GOD for the blessings received by many through literature.

PRAISE GOD for the many day to day contacts with individuals.

PRAISE GOD for the joy of His coming into our lives.

PRAY FOR the initial contacts of the Jimenez family in Girardot.

PRAY FOR the seminary students and for those who teach.

PRAY FOR the Hernandez family in their adjustments and responsibilities as they begin their new work.

PRAY FOR the fifth grade graduates of our schools as they pursue further studies or look for jobs.

PRAY FOR the radio ministry of the Bogota Mennonite Church.

PRAY FOR a teacher for the Ediger children.

PRAY FOR wisdom in selecting a new president for the Mennonite churches here.

PRAY THAT we will each allow the Holy Spirit freedom to produce more of His fruit in our lives.